

## **State legislators are cautious with UI review**

### **Want to ensure consultant respects differences at state's public universities**

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Written by

**Holly Hines**

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Iowa legislators discussed the efficiency study of Iowa's public universities and other topics Saturday during a forum in Coralville.

Lawmakers said that although they support the idea of looking into making the University of Iowa more efficient, they also have concerns, including the cost of the review by Deloitte Consulting, the prospect of losing good university employees and whether Deloitte will respect how Iowa's public universities differ.

State Sen. Bob Dvorsky, D-Coralville, said he thinks the review will show that UI, the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa State University already are fairly efficient.

He said it make sense to assess efficiency periodically, but he hopes the review doesn't lead to any "anti-labor, anti-employee programs."

"If they do, we'll have something to say in the Legislature about that," he said.

State Reps. Vicki Lensing, D-Iowa City, and Mary Mascher, D-Iowa City, said it's important for reviewers to acknowledge the value of the differences between the state's universities and their programs.

Lensing said universities should have the final say on whether to institute the consultant's recommendations.

"Recommendations are one thing; micromanaging is another," she said.

During the forum, hosted by the League of Women Voters of Johnson County, legislators responded to questions from attendees and shared news from the state Capitol.

Also in attendance were Sen. Joe Bolkcom, D-Iowa City; Rep. Bobby Kaufmann, R-Wilton; Rep. Sally Stutsman, D-Riverside; and Rep. Dave Jacoby, D-Coralville.

Legislation recently passed in the Iowa House aimed at preventing financial exploitation of elderly adults also came up at the forum.

Bob Welsh, an Older Iowans Legislature board member, told the lawmakers that he hopes the Senate won't sign off on the House version of the elder abuse bill, but he sees the legislation as a step in the right direction.

He said he'd like to see a provision for providing support services to abuse victims added back into the bill.

"That was in the Senate bill, and it was stricken from the House bill altogether," he said.

Kaufmann said that although he doesn't see the legislation as ideal, he thinks it provides a good framework for future changes.

"It's not exactly what we want, and I also hope that it's not the final bill, but that's what had to be done to get it out of the House chamber," he said.

Mental health care and related services for children came up, as well.

Tammy Nyden, whose child has a neurological disorder, said she wants to see lawmakers take action on reducing the wait time for Iowa Community Based Service Waivers that help families access services for mental health and disability-related issues.

She said she thinks it makes financial sense for the state to provide funding associated with the waivers because children who receive mental health care may not spur expenses, such as justice system costs, later in life.

"The cost of not funding this is extremely expensive to the state," she said.

Bolkcom said mental health issues including the wait time and availability of services in Johnson County are concerning.

"Waiting two years to get services for your very vulnerable child is just unacceptable," Bolkcom said.